

17304/67

TO THE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

98 Portland Place,
London W.1.

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A REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE CONTINUED
OPERATION OF BARROWFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL, GLASGOW

Barrowfield Community
c/o Mr. Brian Addison,
Mrs. Margaret Graham

Barrowfield Community School
c/o Mr. Brian Addison,
Mrs. Margaret Graham
79 Stamford St.,
Barrowfield,
Glasgow G40

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BARROWFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

The free school philosophy If there is one identifiable free school philosophy it is that children are much more intelligent, creative, responsible, and self-disciplined than most adults take them for. It dislikes the authoritarianism of the schoolmen who distrust children, are a little afraid of them, and regiment them and surround them with rules and sanctions to make them behave in a way acceptable to adults. One aspect of the "free" school is to free children from the orthodoxies of the school and its narrow definition of education.

A second crucial feature of those who espouse free school is that educational choice should not simply be restricted to the well-off, as it is today in Britain, but that every parent, no matter how socially or economically deprived should have that much vaunted freedom to decide on their child's education. Free schools, then, are "free" in the economic sense as well.

Free schools are generally freer in a wider sense of lack of accountability to the state system, to Directors of Education, to teaching councils or unions. They perceive their responsibility as to the kids and their parents. Therefore one central item in most free schools is allowing children, or children and parents to make up their own rules, decide their own policy, their own curriculum, and direct their own learning. Free schools normally belong to the children who attend them, and in many cases to their parents as well.

The legality question Free schools must be registered, in England with the Dept of Education and Science, in Scotland with the Scottish Education Department. To receive full registration they must be inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate, but to begin operation they need no more than 5 children as a minimum, a teacher, and premises to work in or from. This gives them the right to apply for provisional registration.

The Barrowfield Community School The school in Barrowfield came about because two lines of force converged - a teacher who was looking for greater scope and challenge than his job in a secondary school allowed, and a group of parents looking for an alternative kind of schooling for their children.

Brian Addison was introduced to the Tenant's Association in Barrowfield for the first time in November 1972. At that meeting he learned that there were a number of parents active in the community who would be eager for a free school in their neighbourhood. Between November and the end of May a number of parents became interested on the one hand, and on the other a number of students at Colleges of Education, and elsewhere, on the other. Over the period of intervening months the growing number of parents and their children and a growing number of students met together to discuss how the school would run, what ground rules would be laid down, what kinds of things the children would be interested in studying.

During this period the search continued for a suitable building and for a source of funds. Christ Church in Crownpoint Road provided a fairly good locus, and the generosity of the church Vestry made it possible for the school to begin operations there. Some funding came from money raised at community discotheques and a little from private contributions, but the search continued for some body or person willing to endow a large enough sum for it to purchase some of the bare essentials. The school opened as an act of faith on May 31st without school furniture, books, resources, without a salary for its one full-time teacher or half a dozen part-time helpers. It is still in search of a sponsor.

What makes it a school? The Barrowfield Community School is in comparison with its state counterparts poor in many respects. It has none of the equipment, none of the hardware or software. It has at the moment only 10 children and one full-time teacher. That is the maximum ratio it will allow. That ratio allows a close personal contact between the one adult and the kids, but it is not only a function of that ratio, it is also a belief by that adult that he can accept these children, the way they dress and talk, their habits, their values, their failings, and with respect and trust for them it will be reciprocated. There are, as a consequence no

We intend to furnish each pupil with a dossier which will be a record of anything he wishes to put in it, critique of school, evaluation of his own work, as well as being available for teachers and others to add their own entries, their evaluations and critique of the pupil's work. This might be seen as a substitute for report card and record of work, being quite simply a record of work but without any of the overtones that these documents normally carry.

In summary there are at present ten children ready to start the new session at the end of August, but we are ready to expand rapidly as soon as we are assured of a continuous source of finance and with that the confidence to add one or two more full time teachers. Their ages are: two thirteen year olds, three fourteen, five fifteen

Our "staff" consists at the moment of:

Full Time Brian Addison B.Sc. with a teaching diploma in secondary maths and engineering.

Part Time John Sperber M.A. completing final year of Diploma in Educational Psychology with teaching certificate in primary subjects

Ann Keenan Diploma in primary teaching (3 year course) and Fröbel Certificate in Infant teaching.

Mary Macaulay Diploma in primary teaching (3 year course)

John MacBeath M.A. M.Ed. with teaching diploma in primary and secondary subjects. Lecturer in Education, Jordanhill College

George Kee B.Sc. M.Ed. with teaching certificate in primary and secondary subjects. Lecturer in Education, Jordanhill College

Our present premises are Christ Church, 142 Crownpoint Rd., Glasgow G40

Our secretary is Margaret Graham, 79 Stamford St. Barrowfield, Glasgow.

Our legal status is that we are provisionally registered as an independent school with the Scottish Department of Education.

Our present source of finance is £5 a week raised by parents running a discotheque, but cannot be guaranteed for the future, money raised by selling pens carrying our name, and occasional contributions from individuals. As a result of all of these our present bank balance is £50. We have not yet bought any equipment for the school and are badly in need of stationery, library books, text books, writing implements, art and craft materials, maps, and we would like to have at least one portable tape recorder, a typewriter, and tools such as hammers, saws etc.

We must reiterate that we do not have any panaceas. We are not in any way challenging other schools or social services, but attempting to supplement their efforts in the most honestly productive a way as possible. We would like at least a chance to prove that we have something worthwhile to offer. Perhaps one of the best recommendations we have is this sentence written by the headmaster of the school in which Brian Addison taught at the time he left to start as Barrowfield's "headmaster":-

"I am perfectly content to go on telling people that you have something quite spectacular to contribute to education".

Signed:-

John Moncreiff.
Headmaster North Kelvinside Secondary
School.
26. 2. 73

John E. C. MacBeath George Kee Brian Addison

"discipline problems". There are no class levels and grade advancements and exams because none of these things are necessary. The school has not been going long enough to work out the details, but everyone will have their own goals and their own way of reaching them, and no subject will be regarded as unsuitable for study. The community of Barrowfield itself and the city of Glasgow are rich enough in resources to provide a whole curriculum of study. If one poses questions like "Why are there so many accidents in Barrowfield? Why are people here less well-housed than people in Newton Mearns? How do changes come about in Barrowfield? Who runs the city of Glasgow? Why are there gangs? one opens a complex of historical, social, psychological and political questions. This is the curriculum of the school. One might add bicycle repairs, car maintenance, cookery, or stamps, and if anyone shows an interest in bee-keeping or embroidery perhaps the school can help them with that too.

One aspect of the school's operations will be to put children into real work situations in the city - in its factories, offices and shops as well as its libraries, museums, zoos, and law courts. Pupils will spend regular periods, say for instance in a photographer's studio or the booking desk of an airport getting the flavour of the job, but at the same time trying to understand that piece of the jig-saw in the larger picture of the way a society functions.

Letting the city take some of the educative responsibility will leave the teacher or teachers free to concentrate their individual attention on single pupils or small groups. If they want to offer them as good a crack at this society's rewards, they will need to work extra hard for O level and Higher qualifications, because it means taking up a lot of slack since the time that their school, their parents and themselves wrote off their chances and resigned themselves to a second-class future.

The school's success will never be evaluated by those inside it in terms of O level passes, but it conceives its duty in terms of achieving these as well as the more important business of a broad and meaningful education. Those working in Barrowfield believe they owe these kids and their parents something. They owe them the chance that falls as a natural birthright to children in other areas of the city. The government has been talking for a long time about "educational priority areas" and if ever a place deserved to be so designated it is Barrowfield. But Barrowfield can't wait and neither can we. It is perhaps a drop in the ocean - 10 kids that may soon enough become 50 - is only a nibble at the problem, but it may show the way, and convince those that prefer to close their eyes to a black spot under their noses that education is as much for the poor as for their rich and good schools are too. It says a lot for the city of Glasgow that there are people interested enough and with enough courage to take things into their own hands.

We must remember that we do not have any money. We are not in any way challenging other schools or social services, but attempting to supplement their efforts in the most modestly productive way we possibly can. We would like at least a chance to prove that we have something worthwhile to offer. Perhaps one of the best recommendations we have is this sentence written by the headmaster of the school in which Brian Robb says of the time he left to start the Barrowfield School: "I am perfectly content to go on telling people that you have something quite spectacular to contribute to education."

John Macdonald,
Headmaster Barrowfield Secondary
School.
(S.S. 1.7)

John Macdonald
Headmaster Barrowfield Secondary School

So much for the theory...how does it work?

The theory always sounds better than the actuality. It has been said that a school's reputation is inversely proportional to the distance you are removed from it. We have no doubt that an observer might expect to find a new panacea and be confronted instead with a pretty grim and bare church hall in a dilapidated area of Glasgow. In it he might find seven children and a couple of teachers. That would be on a good day. Normally at least half the children would be engaged in some activity outside the school building.

Children arrive at the school at about 9:30 in the morning, and remain till somewhere between three-thirty and five. Occasionally they return in the evening. When we acquire our permanent premises it is hoped that the school will be able to open earlier in the morning, stay open in the evenings and run seven days a week - at least have the building and its resources available on that basis.

After we opened the school in June a typical day would find some pupils engaged in redcoration, painting murals, making contacts and overtures to local businesses, beginning projects on the area, interviewing local tenants, or working with the local pre-school playgroup.

We plan to operate in the following way when we re-open:

There are no class levels in the school. Teachers, pupils and parents have to work out together a suitable "timetable" for each child. No two time-tables are the same of course, hence there is no class instruction at all. The only kind of direct instruction is individual or in twos or threes. It is conceivable that all the school could come together for instruction if the occasion demanded, but we do not proceed from any inert assumptions about group teaching.

Each child will be involved in four different kinds of activity in the course of the week.

- i) Working with teachers, other children, parents or other community people, in setting up and following through an individual or small group study or project. This might take the form of a sociological or historical study of Barrowfield, an investigation of the influences of advertising, of television, football rowdyism, the uses and understanding of statistics, Wilberforce and the slave trade etc. etc.
- ii) Meeting with teachers and other children in the school on a regular basis to exchange findings and ideas, evaluate work, make suggestions and criticisms of the running of the school, and plan future strategies and projects.
- iii) Using resources outside the school. Each pupil will spend about two days a week in some out-of-school learning situation - a fire station, museum, library, shop, airport etc. These are not to be regarded as vocational situations, though that is undeniably an aspect of the experience, but as opportunities to learn at first hand about people at work, economics, management, production, safety, planning, ergonomics, consumerism etc. These experiences will be documented in written or audio form as interviews, critiques, descriptions, analyses, subjective impressions.

Resources outside the school need not simply imply "cultural" and business agencies but also include people with particular skills in all walks of life. Thus a pupil might rendez-vous with a "resource person" who could teach them Spanish, pottery, violin, gourmet cookery, tutor them for O level work etc.

- iv) Preparation for O level exams with direct instruction and consultation in the school building or local library.

Parents, pupils, teachers will continue to meet roughly once a week or fortnightly, for it is at these meetings that the groundwork for the school's modus operandi is laid. We hope in the future to involve parents more fully in the teaching rather than simply the management aspects of the school.

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A PROPOSED BUDGET

The following estimates represent a yearly budget for the school based on thirty children and three staff members working full-time. We could certainly "get by" on a lot less if we restricted numbers to ten and took on no more staff. With a demand for places and a desire to establish a realistic alternative we would like to increase our numbers as soon as possible to thirty. For thirty children we reckon this to be a minimum budget for a worthwhile operation. It could easily be doubled before reaching the point of diminishing returns.

1. 3 full time teachers @ £1,000 p.a.	£3,000
2. Improvement to building: fire precautions, hydrants, doors etc.	90
installation of heating for hall	85
renovation of kitchen - tiles, formica etc.	25
paint, brushes etc.	12
addition of washbasin and boys' toilet	60
3. Rent/rates	150
4. Transport to and from resource situations, week-end field trips, evening excursions, holiday schemes etc.	750
5. Heating, lighting, gas, phone bills	250
6. Meals 30 @ 20p per meal x 5 days a week x 40 weeks	1,200
7. Materials: Resource books including library, textbooks etc.	200
Stationery, exercise books, work books etc.	60
Arts and crafts materials, felt tip pens, paints, dyes	
clay, art paper, wool etc.	60
Magazine and newspaper subscriptions	45
Tools	50
Typewriter	20
Tape recorder and 6 tapes	25
	£6,082

Notes on the items

1. We would like to be able to offer a salary of £1,000 but if need be this could be cut to £750. It could be lower yet but we are not confident of attracting staff in that case.
2. The building situation is at present equivocal. If we stay in Christ Church it will certainly need these renovations. We have already begun. If we move to the old police station it will need considerably more. In fact while we are renovating our present premises it is not unlikely that we will be working simultaneously on our future ones.
3. Again this is equivocal. We are not at present charged rates since we operate in a church. However, rates will now be imposed since the building plans to function as a school. They will be of this order approximately. It is also conceivable that we may in future be charged rent.
4. This is perhaps not a completely necessary item. The way we intend to run the school (as outlined above) would be to have children spend two days a week in some resource centre in the city. This would cost something like £240 p.a. in bus fares. We have been up to now organizing field trips, weekend trips, day excursions etc. which we have paid for ourselves because we regard them as valuable. We think they have proved their worth. We would like to extend these to camping holidays etc. The above entry is on the assumption that we acquire a bus of some kind of our own, thus saving continual outlay on public transport for reaching resource centres etc. It is not a necessary, but we feel, a highly desirable item.
5. Estimated. Heating will have to be installed before the winter.
6. Estimated conservatively on the basis of present expenditure for a good meal.
7. Naturally these are conservative estimates. We could treble or quadruple this without much effort. We do not need to however. Assessment of minimum need is problematic. If it came to a crisis we could and would have to function with much less.